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WORKS ON SOCIAL TOPICS.

- I. *Socialism and the American Spirit*. BY N. P. GILMAN. Pp. 376. Boston : Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1893.
- II. *Socialism from Genesis to Revelation*. BY REV. F. M. SPRAGUE. Pp. 493. Boston : Lee & Shepard, 1892
- III. *Prisoners and Paupers*. BY HENRY M. BOIES, M. A. Member of the Board of Public Charities and of the Committee on Lunacy of the State of Pennsylvania ; of the National Prison Association ; of the Pennsylvania Prison Society, etc. Pp. 318. New York : G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- IV. *The Death Penalty*. BY ANDREW J. PALM. Pp. 241. New York : G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1892.
- V. *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, Nineteenth Annual Session*. Pp. 492. Boston : Geo. H. Ellis, 1892.

The frequent appearance of works on social problems is a matter of encouragement. It must be confessed, however, that their general superficiality and prejudice argues little for an immediate solution. The writer's principal qualifications for reviewing works on socialism is an absence of complete persuasion on either side. His former convictions, having failed to pass muster, are out for repairs, and in the meantime he entertains the possibly heterodox opinion that on the one hand the existing system still needs to clear up a point or two before it can be completely justified, and on the other that the socialist is still entitled to a hearing. In other words, neither is so entirely acquitted or condemned that judicial fairness may be dispensed with in this connection.

The opening pages of *Socialism and the American Spirit* led us to expect this from Mr. Gilman, but we confess to a disappointment as we closed the book. The author defines the typical American as independent, optimistic, conservative, practical and distrustful of theoretic reconstructions of society. As such, he is equally disinclined to individualism and to socialism. He adopts as much as he likes of either regardless of precedents or ultimate principles involved. In specific matters the presumption is always in favor of private enterprise and yet "every general consideration of reason leads the American to expect a steady enlargement of the sphere and functions of the State." Notwithstanding this movement toward socialism in practice—a movement to which Mr. Gilman attributes very considerable present results—this typical "American citizen who sees clear and thinks straight" looks with very superior disdain upon socialist programs of every sort. Imported socialism is either a passing malady

or if chronic, it is due to laziness and what Josh Billings would call "general cussedness." The remedy is policemen, etc. Domestic socialism is "literary," "romantic," "sentimental," a distemper of certain novelists and women. The agitation about trusts is "a senseless panic" and to the typical American the whole performance is highly "amusing."

This typical American, so prominent in the earlier chapters as an abstraction, gradually assumes distinctness and merges his personality in that of Mr. Gilman, and this change is so easy and slight as to suggest an identity from the first. Whether Mr. Gilman served as model for his own sketch or not, the sketch certainly seems to us something of a caricature. Americans are neither so disdainful of, or so unaffected by, general theories as are Mr. Gilman and his type. In spite of his strictures we believe few nations have been so influenced by theories of social organization as ours, notably by that of Rousseau during the pre-revolutionary period. We believe too that socialist theories are accorded a much more serious hearing and are making a more serious impression in America than he supposes. Mr. Gilman's laudation of planless evolution seems to us neither rational nor American. "Opportunism" is not the fundamental, but the superficial law of our social evolution, and to ascribe to it alone all the results whose initial causes lie in a profound and far-reaching study of human society, seems to indicate a superficial observation.

As a result of this attitude of mind Mr. Gilman treats immediate problems of social reform like tenement house reform, profit sharing, etc., with admirable candor, but his discussion of the general principles of individualism and socialism is simply a mild mannered sort of tirade which may be just, but is neither judicial nor judicious. It is only fair to say that the bulk of the book is of the better sort and forms a valuable addition to his previous excellent work.

The candid consideration which we have bespoken for socialism is not likely to be furthered by *Socialism from Genesis to Revelation*. The author, a minister, claims to have begun his investigation as an inquirer and to have reached full conviction in favor of socialism. On the latter point there can be no doubt. Beginning by a catch title, which means the genesis of socialism and its revelation, he proceeds to present all possible arguments against the present social order and in favor of its claimed successor. The volume impresses us as a voluminous and indiscriminating compilation. The author has great faith in quantitative argument; "twenty sources of waste," "sixteen reasons in answer to this objection," "eight reasons showing its inadequacy," "twelve reasons showing the practicability," etc., being impressive headings in the contents. To our mind, in spite of

the author's continual reference to ethics, he fails to do justice even to the ethical side of socialism, while his economic discussions betray utter ignorance of the subject. His fancied demonstration of the principle that value is due to labor is a lamentable illustration. He not only ignores the latest discussions of this subject, but makes the needless assumption that this proposition is fundamental to socialism. Why does not some economist show the real possibilities of economics from the standpoint of socialism? As it is, we are reminded of Smart's sentence that "many shut their eyes to the weakness of socialist economics in view of the strength of socialist ethics."

The book contains most of the stock arguments of socialists in a fairly systematic form and seasoned with mild ministerial invective. Nevertheless, we are glad to see the attention of the clergy directed to this important field of ethical inquiry.

Prisoners and Paupers is an attempt to emphasize certain facts of crime and pauperism rather than to candidly examine the subject. Statistics are used which are impressive enough in themselves, but the writer has unfortunately felt it necessary to "bear on" by a long and monotonous series of emphasizing adjectives which, of course, only weary the reader's patience and lessen his power of receiving impressions. The appalling impressiveness of the facts is farther reduced by the spirit of pessimistic and querulous criticism which pervades the book. The increase of crime and pauperism is explained by a number of causes, each one of which is made sufficient to account for it all. Sometimes the reasoning is remarkable, as when he explains the smallness of French immigration to this country by the excellence of French roads. How about Italy and Germany which with roads scarcely inferior to those of France, send us their millions. The author concludes that the race is deteriorating physically (baldness, etc., being urged in proof) and explains crime and pauperism by this deterioration. This is illustrated by comparing pictures of the Milo Venus, the Vatican Sophocles, negro college presidents, etc., with groups of criminals and paupers, a method at least unique.

It is in the remedy proposed, however, that the writer reaches positive originality. He would by surgery sterilize these unfortunates and so prevent their reproduction. In answer to the "sentimental" and unfounded objections to this proposal, he urges the benefit to society of an immediate eradication of crime and pauperism, and to the subject of the bestowal of "satisfaction and comfort for discontent and insatiable desire. Neither should the purpose of this operation . . . be objectionable to the subject." In view of these and similar considerations "it seems inexplicable that the remedy should

have been so long delayed." Of course, along with all this there are many good things in the book.

The Death Penalty is in some respects an excellent book. Its presentation of the arguments against capital punishment is clear and comprehensive, and though intensely partisan, it claims to be nothing more. Like all such presentations it overreaches itself, proves too much and impels the thoughtful man to seek arguments on the other side. Its greatest defect is its freezing disdain for the religious or "superstitious" arguments in favor of capital punishment. These the writer meets in detail with conscientious thoroughness, but in a tone which is, to say the least, altogether maladroit. The man who is really superstitious is more affected by the tone than by the rationality of an argument, and he is not won from a belief in a "brimstone hell" by caustic allusions to it as his "sweetest consolation." In spite of these defects the book is undoubtedly the best presentation to be had of arguments against capital punishment, and we commend it to those in search of such a presentation.

The report of the Conference of Charities and Correction scarcely needs a review. Its predecessors are too well known and too highly prized to require for this either introduction or commendation. This seems to be in some important respects superior to any previous report. It is impossible to either summarize or criticise here its varied and variously valuable contents, but those interested in the subject will find here much that cannot be neglected. The great interest shown in the meetings of this Conference argues favorably for an advance in our knowledge upon this subject.

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